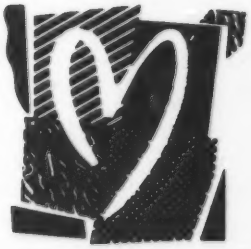
Family Policy Grid



THE PREMIER'S COUNCIL IN SUPPORT OF

ALBERTA FAMILIES

92-02722/

Executive Summary

The family is the single greatest influence on our lives, shaping who we are, how we feel about ourselves and how we approach the challenges of life. Government policies, programs and laws play an important part in the lives of individuals and families. Policies must be assessed to ensure that they encourage healthy family functioning and strengthen the capacity of families to meet the needs of their members.

The Family Policy Grid has been developed to:

1. heighten awareness of how government affects families
2. facilitate review of existing and proposed policies and programs to ensure they have no unintended consequences for families
3. address the consequences of policies for families
4. facilitate agreement on objectives of policies and programs for families
5. facilitate a coherent policy approach to families across government
6. increase sensitivity at all levels of government on the importance of supporting and strengthening families in all actions taken by government

The Family Policy Grid provides a framework for departments to use in developing and assessing policies affecting families. It was designed for use by provincial departments of government as a tool to assist them in reviewing legislation, policies, programs and administrative procedures of government for their anticipated effects on families.

The Grid includes a statement of eight principles to guide policy and program development designed to support Alberta families. These family policy principles focus on family well being, family roles, family diversity, family support, family commitment and responsibility, family interests and partnerships with families and others involved in meeting family needs. The principles must be taken together as each is an interrelated part of the overall family policy perspective. A rationale for each principle supports and upholds the merit of the principle. Questions for assessing the impact on families are also included. While there are many questions which are included in the Grid, the significant question to be asked is **"will this policy, law or program be fair, supportive and encouraging toward Alberta families?"**

Initially the strategy is to focus on major areas of government activity with

respect to their impact on families. Ultimately, the intent is to bring all policies and programs in line with the principles.

The Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families has been assisted by departments in the development of the Family Policy Grid. The Council has also benefited from the review and input provided by an advisory group of academics.

Through its approval Cabinet has declared its support for the Family Policy Grid as the government's statement of principles for strengthening and supporting families. Departments are required to identify the extent to which their programs reflect the principles of the Family Policy Grid, areas for review or change, and any relevant initiatives which are planned or underway.

Further, any relevant policy, legislation or program submitted for Cabinet approval will include an assessment of the impact on families. The role of the Premier's Council is to coordinate the preparation and annual update of a government wide Action Plan in Support of Alberta Families.

Departments that are undertaking a review and evaluation of the effectiveness of government delivered and funded programs which have an impact on families are asked to incorporate questions addressed in the Grid as part of their review. Also, in their staff development plans the need to increase sensitivity of staff to enhancing family well being must be addressed.

The Family Policy Grid will also be made available to local government agencies and community organizations for their information, adaption or use.

Foreword

I take great pleasure in introducing the Family Policy Grid which was approved by Cabinet on December 4, 1991. With approval of the Grid, our government has given its commitment to enhancing family well-being through sensitive and supportive public policies.

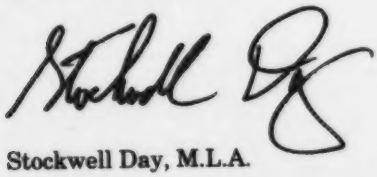
The Family Policy Grid was developed as a tool to assist government departments in their ongoing assessment of the impact of current and proposed legislation, policies, programs and administrative procedures on Alberta Families. I have been encouraged by the enthusiasm and involvement of those who worked with the Premier's Council in the development of this document. As a Council, we are dedicated to continuing to work in close collaboration with all government departments in our efforts to respond with sensitivity to the needs and aspirations of Alberta families. This includes our continuing efforts to work toward a more coordinated approach to policies and programs across government in meeting family needs.

Reflecting public perspectives in this process is absolutely essential. The Council is committed to continuing its dialogue with the public and bringing issues, concerns and recommendations of Albertans forward for attention.

The Grid does not provide us with answers. But, through application of the Grid, important questions are raised for consideration and discussion and a process initiated to focus attention on family well-being.

It was less than two years ago that the Lieutenant-Governor's Conference — Celebrating Alberta's Families, proposed the development of a Grid. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of many who had a role the development of the Family Policy Grid, it is now available for your use. The Premier's Council encourages its use, not only by government departments, but by any organization which develops policies and programs that serve and support families.

With your help and involvement, together we can build a future where families can thrive.



Stockwell Day, M.L.A.
Chairman
Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families

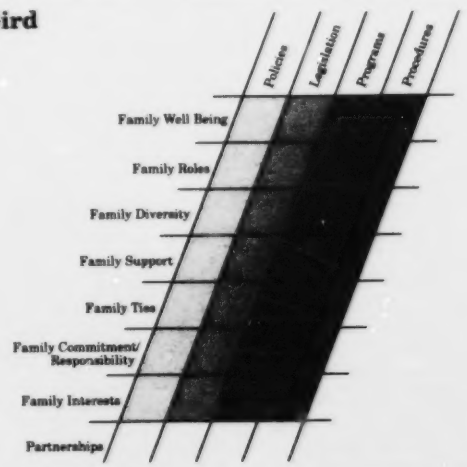
Introduction

The Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families was established in March 1990 as part of several government initiatives to support Alberta families, to ensure that families remain strong and that those in crisis receive the support of a caring society. The role of the Council is to advise the government on how its policies, programs and services may affect family life in Alberta and to ensure that attention is given to the needs of families in all public policies. One of its first tasks has been the development of a Family Policy Grid which is outlined in this document. The Family Policy Grid is a statement of principles against which to assess policies, programs, legislation, and administrative procedures. It has been developed to assist those who are involved in developing laws, policies and programs, or measuring their outcomes, to become more sensitive to their impact on family well being.

The Family Policy Grid has been developed in response to a recommendation put forward at the Lieutenant-Governor's Conference — Celebrating Alberta's Families held in February 1990. This conference provided a beginning to a process of obtaining a broad range of opinions and input from across the province on issues of concern to families. The conference provided the start to discussions with all Albertans about solutions to the complex issues facing Alberta families today and into the future.

The Council has been assisted by the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Policy in the development of the Family Policy Grid (see Appendix A for Terms of Reference). The Council has also benefited from the review and input provided by an advisory group of academics (see Appendix B).

Family Policy Gird



Purpose

The Family Policy Grid has been developed to:

1. ***heighten awareness of ways in which government affects families***
2. ***facilitate review of existing and proposed policies and programs in order to ensure that they do not have unintended consequences for families***
3. ***address the consequences of policies for families***
4. ***facilitate agreement on the objectives of policies and programs for families***
5. ***facilitate a coherent policy approach to families across government***
6. ***increase sensitivity at all levels of government on the importance of supporting and strengthening families in all actions taken by government.***

The focus of activity will be initially on addressing the major areas of government activity with respect to their impact on families. Ultimately, the intent is to bring all relevant policies and programs of government in line with the principles and values reflected in the Family Policy Grid.* It is recognized, however, that the process of initiating change takes time. It must respect resource realities, the difficulties of achieving unanimity in addressing value conflicts as well as the time required to develop the desired awareness and sensitivity needed for implementation of the Grid.

Nothing we do as a government is more important than nourishing and supporting Alberta's families in all their diverse forms.

Policies must be assessed in order to ensure that they encourage the healthy functioning of families and strengthen the capacity of families to meet the needs of their members.

Premier Don Getty

* Wherever policies and programs are referenced in the document, it is intended that legislation and administrative procedures be included.

Why a Focus on Families

The well being of society is promoted by the well being of individuals within families. The family is the single greatest influence on our lives, shaping who we are, how we feel about ourselves and how we approach the challenges of life. It is essential for the transmission of social, cultural and moral values. Families form our foundation and provide our stability as a province. Although undergoing considerable transformation, the family is unparalleled in its efficiency and success in meeting the needs of its members. No institution can successfully replace the family. However, our family and social lives are very different from what they were in previous generations. There is general agreement that the times are economically, socially and morally harder on families and particularly on children growing up today. Families have changed in response to changes in the society and its institutions. The ability of families to adapt to the many changes going on around them, however, attests to their resilience.

Government programs, policies, and laws play an important part in the lives of individuals and families. Policies must be assessed in order to ensure that they encourage healthy family functioning and strengthen the capacity of families to meet the needs of their members. This will assist in supporting families to effectively fulfil their role in the society. The vitality of the province depends on the contributions made by families. For this reason it is important to have policies which support and strengthen families.

The decisions and choices of family members have public consequences in the same way that public policy choices and decisions have consequences for families and their members. Respecting and maintaining this delicate balance of the private and public domains of family life is a challenge for public policy. The focus of these efforts is intended to ensure that public policy supports family life and family well being without encroaching on family privacy and without diminishing the responsibilities of families.

Family life remains an appropriate area for concern for government, if only because virtually all government action affects families — directly or indirectly.

S. Kamerman & A. Kahn
Social Policy Researchers
Columbia University

What is Family Policy

Overall, policies reflect the choices that are made in relation to societal values and the determination of an agreed upon course of action. Policies are set at all levels of government including federal, provincial and municipal. Clearly no modern industrial society can avoid policies that affect the family. The real choice is between a deliberate, coherent family policy and one of inconsistency and mischance. All policy affects families directly or indirectly in both positive and negative ways. Consequences of these policies can be intended or unintended. If all aspects of government that affect families are included, then family policy encompasses most government actions. In the context of this document, family policy is defined as "what government does to and for families in particular those public policies that are explicitly designed to affect the situation of families with children . . . individuals in their family roles . . . and those that have clear consequences for families even though impacts may not have been intended." (Kamerman & Kahn, 1989)

The government has a myriad of policies and programs which have consequences for families. They have been put in place at different points in our history with varying goals and orientations. The focus of public policies to date has been primarily in the context of helping individuals. Even social policies for individuals (i.e., seniors, youth, children, adults) have not always been designed in terms of the family unit. Family considerations are not generally addressed in the normal process of policy making. The introduction of a family perspective and family well being as a standard by which to assess social policies broadens the scope of social policy concerns.

Family policy is defined as what government does to and for families in particular those public policies that are explicitly designed to affect the situation of families with children . . . individuals in their family role . . . and those that have clear consequences for families even though impacts may not have been intended.

S. Kamerman & A. Kahn
Social Policy Researchers
Columbia University

While the focus of family policy can be broad or narrow, the primary value that ranks first among other values is family well being. Analyzing the impact of policies on family well being requires attention to both implicit and explicit policies. Explicit family policies are those in which the goals or objectives for families are deliberately structured. Examples of such programs are adoptions, family violence, child protection services, child care etc. Implicit family policies are those that affect families although objectives for families are not deliberately structured into them. Examples include sports programs, parks design and curriculum development where the specific goals of the program may not identify objectives for families but nevertheless have impact on them. Implicit family policies are more difficult to understand as their effects on families are not as directed. While these policies have consequences for families, the effects may not have been intended.

What is Family

In any discussion of family, the question of definition arises. It is not an easy question to address and is the subject of considerable debate and discussion. It has been further complicated by realities of separation, divorce, remarriage and surrogate parenthood. There are those who define families according to structure, i.e., who is defined as part of a family or not part of a family. How rigid or fluid the boundaries are reflects who is in and who is out. There are others who look at families in terms of what they do for their members and their contribution to society rather than in terms of composition. Because of the variety of family structures that exist in our pluralistic society and the challenge that this creates for defining families in a meaningful way in terms of structure, families are defined here according to their functions.

The following functions are generally viewed as those that families are expected to perform:

- care and maintenance of family members
- addition of new members, through procreation and adoption, and relinquishment at maturity
- socialization of children for adult roles (i.e., spouse, parent, worker, neighbour, voter, community member)
- social control of members
- production and consumption of goods and services needed to support and maintain the family
- promotion and maintenance of family morale, motivation, and healthy lifestyles

Not all functions are undertaken by all families, however, the continuance and well being of our society and all its institutions depends on these contributions being effectively managed by families.

What is increasingly recognized in any discussion of the definition of family is the diversity of family types and values. Families come with different traditions, cultures, socio-economic status, from different regions of the province, with differing priorities and perspectives. Also, families are not static throughout their life cycle. As a result, needs vary among families and within a family over time. This creates complexities and conflicts which must be reconciled and reviewed on a regular basis to effectively respond to changing family needs.

Nevertheless, in spite of the difficulty of coming up with a good cut-and-dried definition of the family, if we ask ourselves, or anybody else, who is their family, most people will be able to give a clear and unambiguous answer. For instance, they may say "my family consists of my spouse, my children, my parents and Aunt Sally." However, they may not list Uncle Herbert, because there is very little interaction with him.

Margrit Eichler
Sociologist
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

What is the Family Policy Grid

The Family Policy Grid provides a framework for departments to use in developing and assessing policies affecting families. The Grid includes a statement of eight principles (see pages 13 to 29) to guide policy and program development designed to support Alberta families. The rationale provided for each principle supports and upholds the merit of the principle. Questions are included under "areas for consideration" to assist in making an assessment of the impact of the policy or program being reviewed, on families. It is essential when reading or applying the Family Policy Grid that the principles are taken together as each is an interrelated part of the overall family policy perspective.

As previously indicated, all policy affects families, directly or indirectly, in both positive and negative ways. In order to protect families from unintended consequences of policies as well as to shape and develop policies that support family well being, we need to understand policies in terms of their impact on families. A good understanding of families is also needed so that both what is done by government, and how it is done, can be influenced by the realities of family life.

The Family Policy Grid is not a remedy in itself, but a standard by which laws, policies, programs and administrative procedures can be assessed. The Family Policy Grid was designed for use by provincial departments of government to assist them in reviewing legislation, policies and programs of government for their anticipated effects on families. The Grid may also assist municipalities, school boards, agencies and organizations to assess their policies, programs and administrative practices to determine if they are sensitive to and supportive of families. The intent is to generate discussion and review with the central tenet of all actions for families being "first of all, do no harm." While there are many questions which are included in the Grid, the significant question to be asked is "will this policy, law or program be fair, supportive and encouraging toward Alberta families?."

Through the Family Policy Grid, the government is declaring its intent to promote the stability of Alberta families, and to consider families in everything that is done by government.

It is essential when reading or applying the Family Policy Grid that the principles are taken together as each is an interrelated part of the overall family perspective.

The intent is to generate discussion and review with the central tenet of all actions for families being "first of all, do no harm."

Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families

How Will The Grid Be Applied

The Challenges

The Grid makes the value positions of the government more explicit, but it does not make the task of choosing between alternative strategies and outcomes any easier. Any analysis of legislation, policies and programs with regard to their impacts on families requires application of value judgements and personal assessments.

The purpose is to foster discussion and assessment of the impact of current and proposed approaches to policies and programs. The challenge is to find agreement on the most effective strategies recognizing that consensus on objectives is not always possible. Ambiguity and conflict can emerge when there are diverse values and perspectives. However, the potential difficulties of applying the Grid to the decision making process in departments does not negate the value of doing so. Explicitly detailing the underlying assumptions on which policies are based, with a renewed sensitivity to family issues, will increase the likelihood of changes which benefit family well being.

I insist on the expression "think family" because it points to the engine of government activity seeking to adapt its policies to family reality.

Maurice Champagne
Former Special Advisor to the Quebec Minister of Family Policy

Applications

1. Review of Existing Policies, Legislation and Programs

The role of departments is to review policies and programs to determine to what extent they reflect the principles in the Family Policy Grid. The Premier's Council is interested in determining where there is consistency with the principles and where additional review or changes are required. Also, identification of changes that are planned or underway to bring policies and programs more in line with the principles should be included as well as the implications of those changes. Strategies and recommendations may involve changes and/or initiatives in such areas as:

- administrative procedures
- legislation, regulations
- funding allocations
- eligibility criteria
- staffing and training
- client accessibility
- mechanisms for family involvement
- coordination with other programs
- pilot programs or projects
- education and awareness enhancement
- research initiatives
- program evaluations

Departments are asked to ensure that consequences for families are considered in current policies and programs. Departments are respon-

sible for the identification of issues and accountable for the implementation of approved changes with the role of the Premier's Council being one of reviewing the government wide action plan and reporting on progress to Cabinet. The initial assessment undertaken by departments will lead to a government wide action plan. The action plan is intended to address major areas of priority for change. Ultimately, the Family Policy Grid will be applied to all policies and programs in more depth using the specific questions which follow each principle as a way to review the changes that must be made to improve overall effectiveness for families. Using existing departmental evaluation processes, any policy or program can be assessed in terms of its impact on families by addressing the questions proposed in the Family Policy Grid. The questions included in the "areas for consideration" are intended to stimulate thinking but are not program specific or all inclusive. In any review undertaken, additional questions may need to be considered within the context of the specific program.

2. Assessment of Proposed Policies, Legislation and Programs

Any proposed policy, legislation or program submitted for Cabinet approval should be assessed using the Family Policy Grid. This would include an assessment of the impact on families of implementing the proposed policy, legislation or program. Cabinet decision would be influenced in part by this assessment.

Albertans have the spirit and strength to affect positive change — the fact that government set up the Council indicates its potential willingness and commitment to lead and participate in positive change for families.

Stockwell Day, M.L.A.
Chairman, Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families

3. Ongoing Operations

A focus on overall family well being is critical in terms of the actions of staff at all levels of the department. As such the Family Policy Grid should form part of the values of departmental operations and become a fundamental part of staff behaviours at all levels. This can be achieved through communication of the principles to all staff and integration of this information in educational and awareness sessions.

The Grid can also be used by government departments to help incorporate a family focus in evaluations that are undertaken of the effectiveness of government funded programs.

4. Local Government Agencies, Organizations

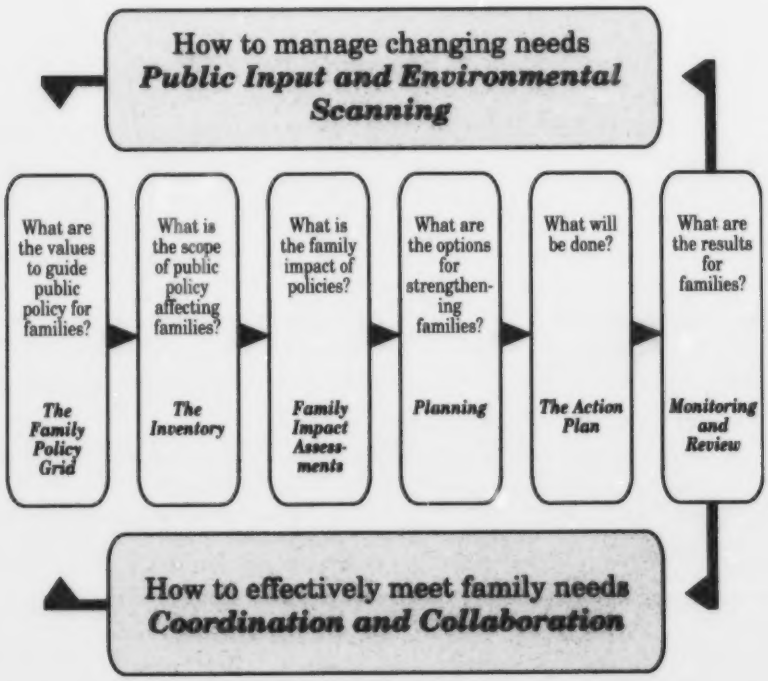
The Family Policy Grid serves as a guide, not a blueprint, which can be adapted to a variety of contexts to assess the effects of existing or pro-

posed policies or programs. The questions put forward in "areas for consideration" can be used by local governments to review their policies, determine if existing programs should continue to be supported, critique proposed policies, guide studies of the impact of programs or develop a policy response to an issue or need.

An agency or organization may use the Grid as a guide to undertake a self assessment of programs offered, in assessing its response to community issues or needs or in incorporating a family focus into its policies (e.g., school board policies).

Use of the Grid in all of these ways should lead to an improved understanding of how to design and implement programs that are supportive of family life.

Family Policy Process


How to manage changing needs
Public Input and Environmental Scanning
What are the values to guide public policy for families?
The Family Policy Grid
What is the scope of public policy affecting families?
The Inventory
What is the family impact of policies?
Family Impact Assessments
What are the options for strengthening families?
Planning
What will be done?
The Action Plan
What are the results for families?
Monitoring and Review
How to effectively meet family needs
Coordination and Collaboration

I believe in Alberta's families. I believe that their strength and vitality is a measure of an ability to succeed in the future, and I believe that together we can effectively help our families meet any challenges in the future.

The Honourable
W. Helen Hunley

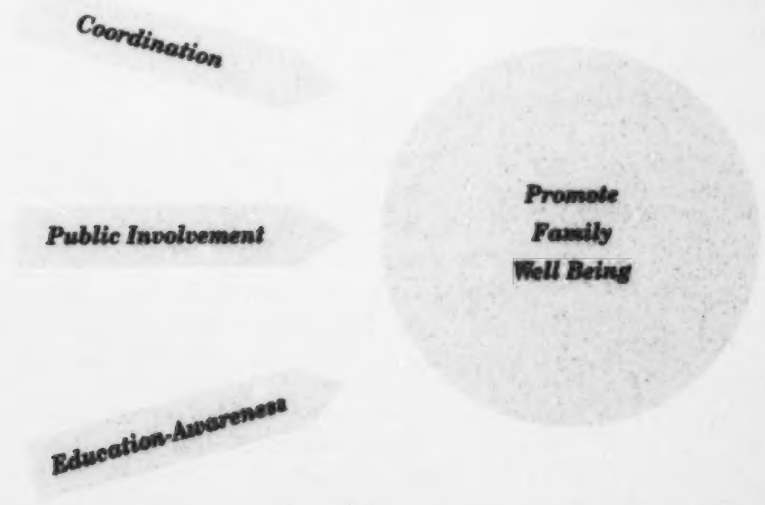
The Role of the Premier's Council

Coordination

The role of the Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families is to act in an advisory capacity with respect to policies, programs and services which may impact on family life in Alberta. The Council works with all departments of government to facilitate review of policies and programs in light of their impact on families and to coordinate a plan of action on required changes in legislation, policies and programs.

The importance of the coordinating role cannot be underestimated, both in terms of the need to integrate services for families and coordinating policies, legislation and programs affecting families in order to facilitate consistency and congruence of family policies across government departments.

Over the past several years a wide variety of programs and services have been developed to support and assist families. This has led to specialization which can, at times, result in fragmentation of service delivery and creation of separate program eligibility criteria and funding streams for services that may not always be integrated one with another. Families do not necessarily fit into specific service categories. Their needs are interdependent. Failure to meet needs of families in one area often exacerbates their requirements in another. The need for interdependent solutions to family concerns are coming into much greater public focus. A major challenge for the Premier's Council is to facilitate a change process working together with Deputy Ministers across all government departments and



the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Policy while maintaining departmental accountability and authority for implementing changes.

Public Involvement

The Premier's Council also has an important role in facilitating public debate and discussion of issues. In the fall of 1988, the Alberta Government adopted a statement of social policy for Alberta entitled "Caring and Responsibility." As one of its principles, the document states that "Government policies and programs should involve, to the extent possible, communities and community agencies in the development, delivery and evaluation of services to families."

The challenge for the Council is to facilitate public input by identifying issues of concern to families, reconciling competing perspectives, informing the public and facilitating change, where required, based on this input. Where changes are indicated in government policy, the Council will work with departments to address public concerns. However, the government must not take sole responsibility for action on all issues. Responsibility for making required changes to support family well being must be a cooperative venture with families, communities, businesses, organizations and agencies. As such, the role of the Council is enhanced by working in partnership with others in addressing priority areas that are amenable to change.

Albertans have values that are important to them and their families — we need to do all we can to make sure that government programs and actions reflect that reality.

Stockwell Day, M.L.A
Chairman, Premier's Council in support of Alberta Families

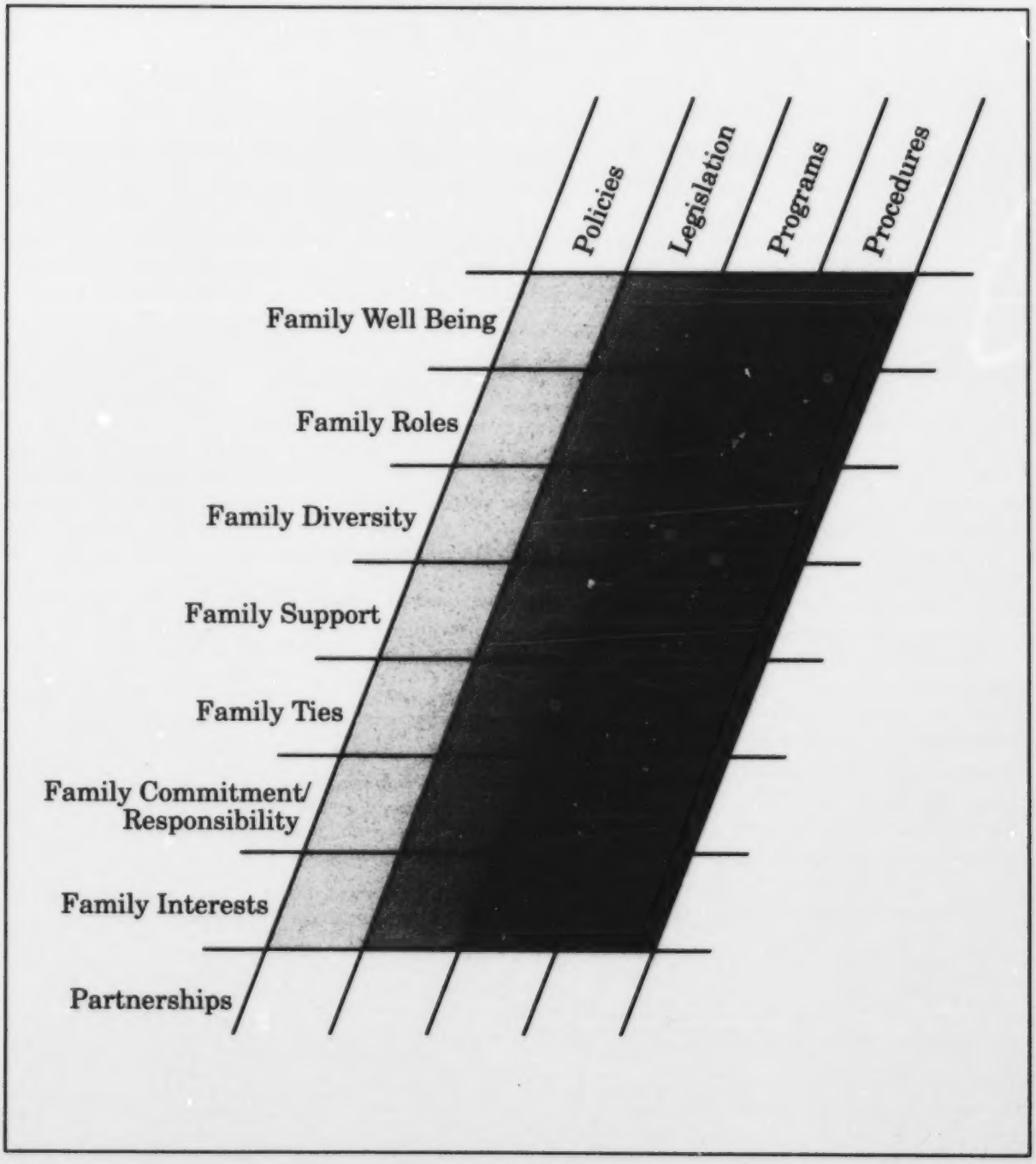
Change depends on expansion of vision, on new ways of understanding an issue. Policies of themselves, do not produce change. Public debate and discussion of issues is an essential prerequisite.

Education/Awareness

In addition to its role in facilitating public input, the Council serves as a source of information for all government departments on family initiatives elsewhere, as well as research and demographic data about changing family realities. This information is available to government departments as a basis for planning and policy development. The Council is also compiling data about government programs related to family integrity and functioning, to assist in the identification and analysis of government programs which address and support family functions.

The Council provides orientation sessions and consultation to government departments to assist them with the application of the Grid.

The Family Policy Grid



Principle 1

Government policies and programs recognize and support families as fundamental to the strength and stability of society.

Rationale

- The well being of society is promoted by the well being of families. The well being of the family unit, in turn, depends on the effective functioning of individual family members.
- Families have an important role in the society in:
  - caring for and about each other
  - having and rearing children to create a new generation
  - passing on social, cultural and spiritual values and traditions
  - teaching life skills
  - providing advice and guidance
  - promoting a healthy lifestyle
  - setting and enforcing rules, norms and appropriate behaviour for each other
  - providing food, shelter, clothing and other necessities through income and employment
  - encouraging personal confidence and motivation
- There is no effective substitute for the role that families have in nurturing, loving and caring for each other.
- Families do not exist in isolation. The values, decisions and behaviours of family members both reflect and influence the larger social system to which they belong.
- Family life is strengthened when the conditions in which families can thrive are attended to through supportive public policies in areas such as child care, health care, education, income support, environment, housing etc.
- It is in the best interests of society that public policies recognize the fundamental role of families in the strength and overall stability of society.

. . . as we prepare for the 21st century, I believe that the key to strengthening the social and economic fabric of Alberta lies in ensuring that the family, in all its diversity, remains a central and enduring force.

Premier Don Getty

Areas for Consideration

- How does the policy or program support the autonomy and vitality of families?
- How is recognition and support for families demonstrated by the policy or program?
- What efforts are made on behalf of families to support continuity and viability of the family unit?
- To what extent and under what conditions does the policy or program encroach on family privacy?
- What attention, if any, is given to the broad societal context and its impact on families?

Principle 2

Government policies and programs support and supplement the ability of families to fulfil their essential roles and responsibilities

Rationale

- Recognizing that families rely on a supportive environment to thrive, policies and programs should reinforce and support the desire for self sufficiency and independence by families.
- A primary objective of policies and programs designed for families should be to support and strengthen families' own ability to manage.
- Any support and assistance that is provided by government to families should not substitute or undermine the capacity of individuals in families to support each other and to make decisions on their own behalf. Interventions that substitute for families should only be made where it is clear that the family will not be able to function sufficiently even with support, in situations of serious risk of harm or at the request of the family.
- Government policies should enable families and members of families to fulfil their roles and responsibilities with consideration given to the differences in their needs and the personal supports available to them.

No other agency on the planet can teach human beings to be intelligent, honest, generous and moral as efficiently as the family.

Roy Bonisteel
Canadian Broadcaster and Author

Areas for Consideration

- In what ways does the policy or program meet the needs of families without diminishing their self sufficiency and independence or inappropriately substituting for their role?
- How does the policy enable families to maintain or enhance self sufficiency and independence?
- In what ways does the policy or program inform families so that they can expand their choices and options in order to make appropriate decisions on their own behalf?
- Whenever it is necessary to impinge on family autonomy, what principles guide program staff to make decisions on behalf of families?
- In what ways does the policy or program demonstrate respect and dignity for the strengths and capabilities of family members even where there are difficulties?
- How does the policy or program enhance parental competence? Are there any aspects of the policy or program which diminish the parental role?

Principle 3

Government policies and programs demonstrate respect for and understanding of the diversity of family life and family needs.

Rationale

- Families vary greatly in their structure, some have children, some do not, some have husbands and wives, others do not. Variations also exist in whether all members of the family live together or separately, who is responsible for economic support and the extent of participation in parenting.
- Policies must take into consideration different types of family structure, differences in the life cycle stages, different ethnic, cultural, racial and religious backgrounds, socio-economic differences and differing community contexts.
- Families vary in their experiences with each other ranging from emotionally satisfying to abusive. Policies must take into consideration the consequences of these differences in family interactions.
- Policies must be examined to ensure that they are based on assumptions that reflect current realities. Acceptance of the reality of family change will enable us to examine the consequences of this change and take into account changing family practices.
- Programs and policies must take into account the different effects they have on different types of families. A policy or program which is beneficial for one type of family may have a negative impact on another.

. . . if any single word could be said to characterize families in Canada today, that word would be DIVERSITY.

Susan McDaniel
Sociologist
University of Alberta

Areas for Consideration

- To what extent do the underlying assumptions about families on which this policy or program is based, appropriately reflect an understanding of the diversity (ie. structure, life cycle, values, roles and traditions) of family life and family needs?
- How does the program effectively build on the strengths of ethnic and cultural values and traditions? Are programs and services which are offered, culturally sensitive?
- How does the policy or program address the need to prevent families and family members from being devalued and stigmatized?
- What efforts are made to support families who are vulnerable, disadvantaged, or at risk?

Principle 4

Government policies and programs seek to support and strengthen families and to decrease the potential for family crisis.

Rationale

- Government has a role in promoting awareness, knowledge and skills in assisting families to meet their requirements, cope with ongoing changes, manage events in their lives, strengthen relationships with each other, and make healthy lifestyle choices.
- An investment in preventive strategies aimed at reaching families at high risk can increase the capacity of family members to manage their lives and decrease the probability of problems from occurring.
- Investing in supportive, developmental, educational and preventive services for families can reduce costly protective, remedial and treatment service requirements.
- Programs and policies for families in crisis should help prevent a worsening situation and help lessen the negative effects of a crisis on family members.
- Economic and fiscal policies of government have a significant impact on family well being.

Caring for your young, or your old or each other is legitimate and important work. The skills we learn in caring for each other are important in prevention of problems for families, for individuals and for society.

Susan McDaniel
Sociologist
University of Alberta

Areas for Consideration

- What efforts are made and resources designated to prevent family problems from occurring or increasing in magnitude?
- What kind of investment is made in the provision of supportive, developmental, educational and preventive services for families in order to strengthen their own ability and capacity to manage effectively?
- What kind of commitment is made to identifying underlying factors that contribute to family distress?

Principle 5

Government policies and programs recognize the strength and persistence of family ties.

Rationale

- Family ties are very persistent even when there are difficulties as a result of separation of family members from each other created by events such as divorce, adoption, or intervention by Child Protective Services. Policies should not inhibit the relationships that are desirable and in the best interests of individuals in these families.
- When any one person in a family is receiving a service, there is usually an effect on the entire family. It is important, therefore, to consider the overall impact of that service on the family when dealing with any member in it.
- The ongoing support and involvement which kin networks can provide are important in contributing to stability and continuity for family members.

Areas for Consideration

- How are the changing situations and relationships in families addressed so that consideration is given to the importance of family ties?
- How do policies and programs facilitate or enhance continuity in family relationships?
- What efforts are made to help family members stay connected? Are there circumstances where this is not desirable? What criteria are used to make these decisions?
- How does the program address and balance individual needs, the needs of the individual in relation to his or her family and the needs of the family as a whole?
- How does the policy or program address the impact of services provided to a family member on the other family members?

Families depend upon stability because first and foremost children are conservative . . . they rely on the stable arrangements in their lives to allow them to flourish.

James Garbarino
President, Erikson Institute for Advanced Study Child Development

Principle 6

Government policies and programs recognize and support the commitment and responsibility which family members have for one another.

Rationale

- Families have a powerful influence on their members in determining their life choices and opportunities.
- Policies and programs must support and strengthen the ability of families to manage and fulfil their own functions including caring for and supporting their own family members.
- Families need to be empowered by providing them with information, choice and involvement in decision making to facilitate their commitment and responsibility.
- Parents are legally responsible for the maintenance of their children. Intervention by government to enforce payment obligations ensures income to those rearing children of divorced or separated parents. This also includes support obligations to spouses in the event of divorce or separation.
- The importance of kin networks and the support they can provide needs to be considered as part of the family system. The availability of family members and the concern of extended kin are crucial to children as well as to the life course of elderly people.
- Policies must be examined to ensure that they do not inadvertently undermine family commitment and support by providing incentives for living separately rather than together.

A loving family creates a sense of belonging, of being part of the past, of living and growing in the present and of the expectation of greater things to come. The loving family assures us that we can count on a high degree of true affection, which in turn, enables us to love ourselves and give love to others.

Geneva Johnson
President and CEO
Family Services America

Areas for Consideration

- How does the policy or program consider the kin network as part of the support system that may be available to the family?
- In what ways is the policy or program sensitive to the needs of family members who are caring for those with special needs?
- How do policies and programs recognize the financial responsibilities of family members to each other and for their dependents? Are there disincentives for families to undertake their responsibilities for dependents?
- Is there any way in which the program strengthens or weakens the commitment and responsibility of family members to each other?
- How does the policy or program encourage the mutual support that individuals in families can give one another?
- Does the policy or program work to enhance self help initiatives and supportive networks (i.e., churches, neighbourhoods, volunteers, friends, community agencies) to enhance family commitment and responsibility?
- Does the policy or program ease or impede the decisions of families to marry, divorce, separate, adopt, give birth, etc.?

Principle 7

Government policies and programs respect that family members have legitimate interests in the decisions which are made on their behalf.

Rationale

- Family members have legitimate interests in each other which are based on emotional, biological and legal bonds. These interests must be considered in decisions which are made with and on behalf of families.
- The ability of family members to help identify and provide solutions and alternatives which are appropriate for them must be nurtured and supported.
- Policies and programs must consider the importance of the involvement of family members in decisions which affect them.

Areas for Consideration

- How are the needs and legitimate interests of the individual addressed in decisions made on behalf of families?
- On the basis of what principles are decisions made when there are competing interests (eg. best interests of the child)?
- Does the policy or program sufficiently reflect the need for information on which family members can choose to exercise their legitimate interests?
- Under what circumstances does the policy or program respect or breach confidentiality?

Even severely discouraged, neglectful families are likely to have actual or potential strengths and resources available to them which can be mobilized for modification of the neglect situation.

Philip Popple et al.
School of Social Work
University of Tennessee

Principle 8

Government policies and programs recognize the value of partnerships with families and with others involved in meeting the needs of families.

Rationale

- Coordination at all levels will enhance communication and effectiveness in working together on behalf of families. This includes families, service providers, professionals, community and government agencies, federal, provincial and municipal governments.
- Partnerships which include the family as an informed, active and voluntary participant in programs and services which affect them are more likely to be on target with their needs.
- The needs of families can be complex and diverse in nature and not likely to be well addressed by any one person or agency.
- Family life can be enhanced through cooperation and the shared responsibilities of families, professionals, community groups, private agencies, employers, volunteers and government.
- Families are better served when there is a coordination of efforts and meaningful involvement by all those who have some role to play in supporting them.

Promoting strong families, helping them stay together and cope with challenges and stress are shared responsibilities — a partnership of individuals, families, communities and government in Alberta.

The Honourable
W. Helen Hunley

Areas for Consideration

- How does the policy or program take into consideration the importance of partnerships in meeting the needs of families?
- How is the need for coordination at all levels addressed?
- What consideration is given in the policy or program to the role of volunteers, self help, relatives, friends, community agencies, churches, etc?
- How does the policy or program empower communities to meet the needs of families?
- What kind of measures are taken to ensure accountability?
- Are families involved in planning, implementing and evaluating policies and programs? What opportunities are provided for such involvement? What kind of information is given to families to help them fulfil their responsibilities?

Glossary

Authority — The power to control, command or act which is defined by position, law or custom.

Autonomy — Capability for independent action.

Collaboration — Two or more stakeholders working together and pooling their expertise and/or resources to achieve or enhance the resolution of matters requiring their mutual contribution.

Coordination — Two or more stakeholders working in harmony toward a common objective while maintaining accountability and responsibility within their separate organizations.

Empowerment — A process by which individuals, families, organizations or communities recognize and enhance their capacity to master their own affairs and gain greater access to and control over resources.

Family Crisis — A family's perception of an event or problem for which regular problem-solving methods or existing resources are seen as inadequate.

Events that tend to precipitate family crisis include key times of change in the family life cycle, persistent and lengthy stress, or unexpected events causing a sudden shock to the family leaving it temporarily unable to cope. The same event may precipitate a crisis in one family and not in another. In some families crisis may be an isolated incident and in others it may reflect an ongoing inability to function well.

Family Policy — What government does to and for families in particular those public policies that are explicitly designed to affect the situation of families with children . . . individuals in their family roles . . . and those that have clear consequences for families even though impacts may not have been intended. (Kamerman & Kahn, 1989)

Family Policy Grid	A framework which includes principles, rationale and criteria to apply in assessing the impact of public policies, programs, laws and administrative procedures on families, with the intent of identifying approaches which support and strengthen the well being of families.
Family Ties	Emotional, biological, legal or other bonds between or among family members which may be expressed in a desire for commitment and/or continuity in family relations.
Independence	The ability to fulfil one's own responsibilities and to meet one's own needs. Programs may be specifically designed to help achieve the necessary and desired level of independence or may promote the capacity for it. Independence does not mean isolation.
Interdependence	Mutual dependence and sharing.
Kin Network	Persons related by birth, adoption, marriage or common law relationships who are a potential source of identity, caring, commitment and support for each other.
Partnership	A relationship of two or more individuals or groups who together contribute to accomplishing a common objective within a climate of mutual respect and dignity.
Public Policy	The philosophy, principles and guidelines established by the government which are intended to guide the development and implementation of laws, programs, services and procedures.
Prevention	Actions to reduce or eliminate the occurrence of problems or negative outcomes for people at risk. Prevention usually involves identifying contributing factors and reducing their influences.
Program	A planned set of activities or benefits, designed to meet specific needs.

Promotion	The enhancement and optimization of healthy functioning focusing on the acquisition of required competencies and capabilities.
Responsibility	Taking appropriate actions to fulfil one's socially, morally and/or legally expected role.
Self Sufficiency	The capability of individuals or organizations to supply the skills, knowledge and/or resources necessary to meet their own needs or fulfil their own responsibilities within the context of a supportive environment.
Society	The social and cultural patterns, economic and political systems, and institutions within which people of a particular time and place live and interact.
Well Being	The concept of well being involves a delicate balance among physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual and social health. Family well being is promoted when members can identify and realize aspirations, satisfy needs, and adapt to a changing environment.

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Appendix A — Interdepartmental Committee on Family Policy Terms of Reference

Purpose:

To provide an interdepartmental focus on families in order to facilitate effective planning and program design and delivery across government.

To provide input to the process and outputs for the development and implementation of the Family Policy Grid.

To coordinate intra-departmental input to the development and implementation of the Family Policy Grid.

Responsibilities:

1. **Demographics** – to identify needs for demographic information; provide input and review the results of the data produced and assess implications for family policy.
2. **Principles and Values** – to provide input to and review of the Family Policy Grid which includes principles, rationale and criteria against which to review policies, legislation, programs and administrative procedures in government.
3. **Baseline Data** – to facilitate the ongoing development of profiles of programs and services related to the integrity and functioning of families.
4. **Policy and Program Review** – to establish appropriate internal departmental mechanisms to address communication requirements regarding tasks identified, solicit input and facilitate development of departmental action plans in response to the Family Policy Grid.
5. **Education and Awareness** – to advise on strategies to increase awareness of family policy perspectives in government.
6. **Community Consultation** – to facilitate responsiveness to community issues and concerns reflected in the input received through community consultation.
7. **Policy Oriented Research** – to assist in identifying research needs on family policy issues.

Membership:

*Keith Walls	–	AADAC
Jean Campbell	–	ACCESS Network
Gail Babcock	–	Advanced Education
Shirley Myers	–	Agriculture
Howard Kushner	–	Attorney General
*Jeanna Baty	–	Career Development and Employment
Bert Dyck	–	Consumer and Corporate Affairs
Ken McLean	–	Culture and Multiculturalism
Mary Coward	–	Economic Development and Trade
Merv Thornton	–	Education
Dan Philips	–	Energy
Jay Litke	–	Environment
*Katrine McKenzie	–	Family and Social Services
Tom Bateman	–	Forestry, Lands and Wildlife
Cynthia Lowe	–	Health
*Catarina Versaevel	–	Interdepartmental Task Force on Seniors
Jack Freebury	–	Labour
Ken Vincent	–	Municipal Affairs
Judith Jossa-Stephen	–	Personnel Administration Office
Jane Simmons	–	Public Affairs Bureau
Al Benson	–	Public Works, Supply and Services
*Dave Arsenault	–	Recreation and Parks
Paulette Rodziewicz	–	Solicitor General
Neil Murray	–	Tourism
Diane Earl	–	Transportation and Utilities
*Stephen Tkachyk	–	Treasury
Marie Riddle	–	Women's Secretariat

This committee is chaired by Sally Huemmert, Executive Director, Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families.

*Members of the Interdepartmental Subcommittee on Family Policy formed to assist with the detailed development of the Family Policy Grid.

Appendix B — Academic Review

The Premier's Council appreciates the time and investment given by the following individuals from the academic community who reviewed the Family Policy Grid and provided their input.

Maryanne Doherty	– Family Studies, University of Alberta
Joyce K. Engel	– School of Nursing, University of Lethbridge
Gregory T. Fouts	– Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Calgary
James Frideres	– Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Calgary
Joe Hornick	– Canadian Research Institute for Law and the Family
Dianne Kieren	– Associate V.P., Academic, University of Alberta
Kathleen McCall	– Family Studies, University of Alberta
Marnie McCall	– Faculty of Law, University of Calgary
Jason Montgomery	– Family Studies, University of Alberta
Carol Morgaine	– Family Studies, University of Alberta
Diane Pask	– Faculty of Law, University of Calgary
Rodney Thomlinson	– Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary
Karl Tomm	– Faculty of Medicine, University of Calgary
Charles Webber	– Faculty of Education, University of Calgary
Margaret A. Winzer	– Faculty of Education, University of Lethbridge